

AND ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

NEWSFLASHES

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SEPTEMBER LOAN EXHIBITION: The temporary exhibitions of this month in the Loan Galleries will introduce two American painters who have hitherto been seen only in isolated examples in Kansas City and will serve also as an opening of the special exhibitions for the coming winter.

ADOLPHE BORIE, who died in 1934, is only now being appreciated as an important force in the formation of a native American school of painting. He was born in Philadelphia in 1877 of French descent, which is perhaps the explanation of the inherent good taste which is found in all his canvases. He studied first at the Pennsylvania Academy and then followed in the steps of so many American artists of the nineteenth century and went to Munich to complete his training. There is in his painting, however, none of the sombre heaviness of the German school, such as is seen in the work of Duveneck or Chase, and Borie seemed to turn instinctively to the great Frenchmen of his time for his ultimate inspiration.

He returned to his native city of Philadelphia and passed the rest of his life there, better known perhaps as a teacher than as a practicing artist because of his modest nature. Few Pennsylvania artists failed to come to him for guidance and inspiration and it is due to his sympathy and understanding that such men as George Biddle and Franklin Watkins have made their mark in American painting of today.

He rarely if ever turned to landscape for his subject matter, preferring rather the quiet charm of flowers or portraits of his family and close friends. To them he brought the intimate quality of Vuillard or Bonnard, the nineteenth century Victorianism of Mary Cassatt. He led a retired and dignified life and this spirit is reflected in his painting. He avoided all propaganda in his art and painted for the sheer joy of colours and textures and sinuous forms.

Borie is most happy in his studies of flowers and he seems to catch their essential qualities whether they be flamboyant gladiolas or shy anemones. Particularly successful is an unstudied arrangement of sunflowers, which are as arresting as those of Van Gogh but far more subtle in the arrangement of yellow blossoms, orange centers, and green leaves against a vibrant blue background. Here his personal brush stroke can be best appreciated, his process of building up a tone by a variety of superimposed strokes which gives the fine painter quality to his canvases.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art held a memorial exhibition of the work of Borie last year and twenty canvases were chosen from this group by his wife to be exhibited here in the Gallery.

RUSSELL COWLES, although a younger man, has many personal qualities similar to those of Borie. He, too, has remained aloof from all the controversies of the day and has developed a personal style which is equally striking in its integrity. He was born in Iowa in 1887 and his early life was spent in the cities of Algona and Des Moines. He attended Dartmouth College and after his graduation studied painting at the Art Students' League in New York. Subsequently he went to Paris and in 1915 was awarded the Prix de Rome painting fellowship at the American Academy, remaining in Italy five years.

Although his roots are in the Middle West, and this may readily be seen in his landscapes, Cowles has spent much time travelling all over the world. Paris, Greece, Egypt, India, Bali, and China were in succession his fields of study and while in the Orient he spent a year with a Chinese artists, mastering the traditional methods of painting of the great Sung landscapists. For a number of years he has lived in Santa Fe where he has been deeply engrossed in the problems of the light and desert and mountains of that part of America.

His canvases are immediately recognizable in any exhibition, not only for their mature distinction and personal brushwork, but also for their individual colour and fine composition. He is seen at his best in his landscapes of New Mexico and Colorado and to them he brings a love and an understanding that is unusual in American artists. His use of a pinky brown is almost a signature and he combines it with a gamut of greens which results in a rare beauty of colours. His is a happy world of calm and peace, with no suggestion of poverty or tragedy and only an occasional dramatic touch in a lowering sky.

"Hot Springs, New Mexico" is one of his most pleasing landscapes, a fairly literal transcription of nature, with the fine colours of the raw red clay of newly turned earth, the soft green of cactus against an infinite gray sky. "Across the Acequita" is original in composition with the strong vertical accent of the tree trunks in the foreground, the homely, intimate quality of the house and its yard and the lovely colour harmony based on the cool green of the roof. "Shower on the Rio Grande" is one of his most arresting canvases and has a dramatic quality and a fine sense of pattern of the animals drinking in the stream. The still lifes and the portraits are perhaps less personal than the landscapes.

Included also in the group is a series of watercolours, a medium in which Cowles is equally effective. Some of them are almost shorthand notes of the desert and mountains that he knows so well and in which he uses empty spaces as an Oriental would. "Alligator Pool" is a beautiful curvilinear design in which the pattern of the spots on the hides is especially appreciated and "Vertical World", a view of New York, is almost abstract in its treatment.

Cowles is represented in a number of public collections and has won many prizes, but for the first time a comprehensive group of his oils and watercolours are being circulated in a traveling exhibition. One critic found that, "Russell Cowles is today that rare exception to the rule in American art - an artist who has waited until his work reached a mature expression to reveal his achievement."

The group of paintings by Borie and Cowles will open on Thursday, September 1st, and will continue through the month.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: For the month of September, two aquatints from the Tauromaquia Series by Francesco Goya, recent acquisitions of the Print Department, will be featured as the Masterpiece.

Goya was the last great Spanish artist and is still the most universally popular. His ability as a portrait painter in no way overshadows his mastery of the difficult medium of aquatint and in his three superb series of the "Caprices", the "Disasters of War" and the "Tauromaquia", he remains unexcelled. With worldwide attention focused on Spain, the Masterpiece will have an especially timely interest.

The first print to be featured is "The Death of the Mayor of Torrejon", perhaps the finest of the series from the point of view of original composition and the stark tragedy that Goya has caught. The artist had seen the accident which occurred at one of the great festivals of Madrid and with the simplest means has portrayed the death of the mayor and the horror of the crowds. Some critics have found a self-portrait of Goya in the head peering over the back rail.

In the second prints, "A Picador Fallen from His Horse Under the Bull", Goya has recorded one of the fortunes of the ring. It is a brutal comment, without sentimentality and with no sympathy for the fallen picador. Goya had been a bull fighter in his youth and knew well the fatalism of the toreadors. A misstep has given the bull the upper hand and the isolation of the incident is proof of the artist's greatness.

Both prints are from the first edition of 1815, supervised by Goya himself, on an unsized paper which produced the most sensitive proofs. In the handling of blacks and whites to give mass and volume, tragedy and truth, Goya has excelled himself.

SWEDISH PRINTS: For the last two weeks of September, Gallery XVI will be installed with a series of Swedish Prints which have been assembled by the Swedish Association of Fine Arts of Stockholm. The group was sent to America in exchange for an exhibition of Contemporary American Prints and is being circulated throughout the United States by the Society of American Etchers, of which John Taylor Arms is the president. It was first shown as Rockefeller Center in New York City.

It is composed of 185 prints representing thirty-four contemporary Swedish etchers, lithographers, and workers in wood-cuts. This is the first time that a comprehensive exhibition of the graphic work of Sweden has been seen in this country and it has attracted universal interest.

GALLERY CHANGES: Gallery XIII has been installed with a comprehensive group of Incunabula from the permanent collection, including manuscript and printed books and printed pages of the 15th and 16th century from Germany, Italy, and France. Exquisite examples of Persian and Egyptian calligraphy of the 11th to the 16th century are also shown in pages from the Koran.

The outstanding example in the European field is perhaps a leaf from the Gutenberg Bible of 1450-55. A page printed by William Caxton in 1482 is also shown and a fine complete copy of the Nuremburg Chronicle of 1493. A French Book of Hours of 1430 has a beautifully composed page of manuscript and exquisite miniatures.

A group of Astbury Figures, Salt Glaze Ware and Slip Ware from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Frank P. Burnap has been installed in the North and South ends of the East Corridor of the first floor. This collection of English Pottery is the finest and most comprehensive in America and the magazine "Antiques" featured the group of Slip Ware in its August number. Several of the pieces illustrated in the article are now on view in the Gallery.

Two contemporary paintings, lent by Mrs. Gerald Parker, have been hung in Gallery XV. One is by the well-known French painter, Pierre Roy, who is often credited with starting the movement of Surrealism. It is a sensitive arrangement of varied objects, a necklace of pearls in a blue velvet box, several nuts, a wrapped package, and a small model of a medieval French chateau. The colour is exquisite and it is painted in his characteristic miniature technique. The other is a "Portrait of a Boy", a gouache by the Polish artist Raymond Kanelba who had a successful exhibition in New York this past winter. Kanelba's children are charming, almost ethereal and they are touched with an elfish beauty that makes them irresistible. The colours are soft and pastel-like, with a fine blue in the shirt of the boy.

During the winter months a series of Japanese prints from the permanent collection will be shown in Gallery XXIV. The exhibition will be changed each month in order to present through the season a comprehensive survey of the Japanese print-maker's art. The September group ranges from the early hand-coloured prints of Moronobu to the early colour printing of Masanobu. The Gallery collection of prints is large enough to illustrate with excellent examples the work of all the great masters and their most important pupils, from the beginning of the popular school of print makers in the seventeenth century down to the interesting revival of today.

STAFF ACTIVITIES: The Director has just returned from a summer spent in Europe, where Egypt, Greece, Italy, and France were visited. Much interesting material on objects in the permanent collection was gathered, as well as notes on Italian paintings in the continental museums in preparation for the course of Wednesday Evening Lectures of this coming winter which will be a survey of Italian Painting.

Laurence Sickman, Curator of Oriental Art, will leave soon after the first of September on a leave of absence for the Fogg Museum of Harvard University where he will give a course on Oriental Art during the first semester. He will return to the Gallery in February and during his absence, Albert Ten Eyck Gardner of the Rubel Asiatic Research Bureau of the Fogg Museum will be in

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charge of the Oriental department here. Mr. Gardner is a native of Philadelphia and has been associated with the Fogg Museum for several years. In addition to his work in the oriental field, he is an authority on museum history and is collaborating with Professor Sachs on several books on this subject.

Frances O'Donnell, head of the Department of Junior Education, is at present in London and will return to the Gallery the end of the month.

James Roth has just returned from the Fogg Museum of Harvard University where he was awarded a scholarship for summer study. He specialized in restoration work and research in painters' materials and techniques.

JUNIOR EDUCATION: The Game Tray will reopen on the first Saturday in September and will again be available for any child visiting the Gallery. The Saturday classes for the winter will begin on October 15th and announcement of the specific classes and registration dates will appear in the October News Flashes.

NOTES: The fine Court Cupboard in the American Keeping Room is illustrated in the August number of "Antiques", where it is identified as an outstanding example of early oak furniture of Ipswich, Massachusetts.

In commenting on the reception on the part of the French critics of the American Painting Exhibition held this summer in the Jeu de Paume at Paris, the Art News of August 1st notes: "Few individual paintings came in for unanimous comment, though nearly all of the reviews praised the still life, "After the Bath" by Raphaele Peale, lent by the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery". Both the Peale and our Bingham, "Fishing on the Mississippi", which was also lent, were illustrated in the catalogue of the exhibition.

The publication LIFE, sent a special photographer from New York to make colour reproductions of the Gallery paintings by Boucher and Chardin for an article which will appear soon on French 18th century paintings in America.

The American Artists Group of New York City have made a colour reproduction of the Andrée Ruellan painting, "Mountain Laurel", which was presented to the Gallery this spring the Mystic Tie Lodge, Kansas City Chapter of the Degree of Honor Protective Association, in memory of Mrs. Almaretta Morgan.

William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art
Kansas City, Missouri

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